

In the claims:

Claims 1-3. (Canceled)

Claim 4. (Currently Amended) A backing plate for a drum brake assembly comprising an abutment plate comprising a first part configured to align with and be attached to an axle housing of a vehicle such that said axle housing may pass therethrough and a second part extending from said first part and configured to receive braking forces applied thereto by brake shoes during braking and transmit said braking forces to said axle housing through said first part, and a shielding plate extending radially beyond said abutment plate and configured to shield brake components, wherein said shielding plate is configured to support said brake shoes and a hydraulic cylinder for operating said brake shoes, said abutment and shielding plates are made of different materials, and said shielding plate is made of damped steel that dampens noise and vibrations.

Claim 5. (Cancelled)

Claim 6. (Previously Presented) A backing plate according to claim 4 wherein said damped steel comprises first and second layers of steel of approximately equal thickness.

Claim 7. (Previously Presented) A backing plate according to claim 4 wherein said abutment plate is made of steel.

Claims 8-19 (Cancelled)

Claim 20 (Presently amended) A drum brake assembly comprising a shielding plate made of vibration dampening material that dampens noise and vibrations, said shielding plate being configured to support and shield brake components including drum

brake shoes and a hydraulic cylinder for operating said drum brake shoes, an anchor block for engaging ends of said brake shoes, and an abutment plate having a first part configured to align with and be attached to an axle housing of a vehicle such that said axle housing may pass therethrough and a second part extending from said first part and engaging said anchor block to receive braking forces applied thereto by said brake shoes during braking and to transmit said braking forces to said axle housing through said first part, said abutment and shielding plates being made of different materials.

Claim 21. (Previously presented) A drum brake assembly according to claim 20 wherein said damped steel comprises first and second layers of steel of approximately equal thickness.

Claim 22. (Previously presented) A drum brake assembly according to claim 20 wherein said abutment plate is made of steel.

Claim 23. (Previously presented) A drum brake assembly according to claim 20 wherein said abutment plate is made of steel having a thickness of 3mm to 6mm.

Claim 24. (Previously presented) A drum brake assembly according to claim 23 wherein said damped steel has a thickness of 0.8mm to 1.2mm.